

# The National Provider Identifier

January 2006



## The National Provider Identifier (NPI)

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 requires the adoption of a standard unique identifier for health care providers. The NPI Final Rule issued January 23, 2004 adopted the NPI as this standard.

## What is a National Provider Identifier?

- The NPI is a 10-digit, intelligence free numeric identifier (10 digit number). Intelligence free means that the numbers do not carry information about health care providers, such as the state in which they practice or their provider type or specialization.
- The NPI will replace health care provider identifiers in use today in HIPAA standard transactions. Those numbers include Medicare legacy IDs (UPIN, OSCAR, PIN, and National Supplier Clearinghouse or NSC).
- The provider's NPI will not change and will remain with the provider regardless of job or location changes.

## Having an NPI does not:

- Ensure a provider is licensed or credentialed;
- Guarantee payment by a health plan;
- Enroll a provider in a health plan;
- Turn a provider into a covered provider; and
- Require a provider to conduct HIPAA transactions.

## Why do we need the National Provider Identifier?

- Simpler electronic transmission of HIPAA standard transactions;
- Standard unique health identifiers for health care providers, health plans, and employers; and
- More efficient coordination of benefits transactions.

## Who can apply for the NPI?

- All health care providers (e.g., physicians, suppliers, hospitals, and others) are eligible for NPIs. Health care providers are individuals or organizations that render health care.
- All health care providers who are HIPAA-covered entities, whether they are **individuals** (such as physicians, nurses, dentists, chiropractors, physical therapists, or pharmacists) or **organizations** (such as hospitals, home health agencies, clinics, nursing homes, residential treatment centers, laboratories, ambulance companies, group practices, HMOs, suppliers of durable medical equipment, pharmacies, etc.) must obtain an NPI to identify themselves in HIPAA standard transactions.

## What is a HIPAA-covered health care provider?

It is a health care provider who transmits any health information in electronic form in connection with a transaction for which the Secretary of HHS has adopted a standard, even if the health care provider uses a business associate to do

so. Go to <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/HIPAAGenInfo/Downloads/CoveredEntitycharts.pdf> to access a tool to help establish whether one is a covered entity.

## Is a sole proprietor/sole proprietorship an individual or an organization?

A sole proprietor/sole proprietorship is an individual and is eligible for a single NPI. The sole proprietor must apply for the NPI using his or her own SSN, not an EIN even if he/she has an EIN. Because a sole proprietor/sole proprietorship is an individual, he/she cannot be a subpart and cannot designate subparts.

## Who cannot receive an NPI?

Any entity that does not meet the definition of a “health care provider” at 45 CFR 160.103, which would include billing services, value-added networks, re-pricers, health care clearinghouses, non-emergency transportation services, and others.

## When can we apply for the NPI?

Health care providers can apply **now** for their NPI on the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES) web site <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>.

## What is the deadline for applying and when will the NPI be effective?

### All Entities:

- HIPAA covered entities such as health care providers who conduct HIPAA standard transactions, health care clearinghouses, and all but small health plans, must use **only** the NPI to identify HIPAA covered health care providers in standard transactions by **May 23, 2007**. Small health plans (less than 5 million dollars in annual revenues) must use **only** the NPI by **May 23, 2008**.

### Medicare Providers:

- Medicare Fee-For-Service (FFS) providers can begin to use the NPI January 3, 2006. Medicare systems will accept claims with an NPI, but an existing Medicare legacy identifier **must also be on the claim**.
- Starting October 2, 2006, Medicare FFS providers may submit an existing Medicare legacy identifier and/or an NPI on claims.
- If you are not a Medicare FFS provider or supplier, you need to be aware of the NPI readiness schedule for each of the health plans with which you do business, as well as any practice management system companies or billing companies (if used). They should determine when each health plan intends to implement the NPI in HIPAA standard transactions.

## Will the NPI replace the Medicare certification or enrollment process?

No. The NPI will not change or replace the current Medicare enrollment or certification process. A HIPAA covered provider or supplier will not receive payment from Medicare until it is properly enrolled and certified in the Medicare program.

## Resources for Additional Information

A CMS web page dedicated to providing all the latest NPI news for health care providers is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProvIdentStand/> on the web. This page also contains a section for Medicare Fee-For-Service (FFS) providers with helpful information on the Medicare NPI implementation.

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# For Healthcare Providers Who Are Individuals

January 2006



Are you drowning in a sea of provider numbers? Do you have to keep track of many different identifiers, provider numbers, and provider identification numbers? Do you forget which number to use with which payer? If so, help is on the way!

In authority delegated by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is pleased to announce the availability of the standard unique health identifier for health care providers. This new identifier, the National Provider Identifier (NPI), is a single health care provider identifier that will replace the provider identifier(s) you currently use in the standard transactions that you conduct with each health plan with which you do business. The NPI was adopted by the Secretary in accordance with the requirement of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) that the Secretary adopt a standard unique health identifier for health care providers. This identifier must be used by all HIPAA covered entities, which are health plans, health care clearinghouses, and those health care providers who transmit any health data in connection with a transaction for which the Secretary has adopted a standard (known as standard transactions). All HIPAA covered entities must accept and use NPIs in standard transactions by May 23, 2007 (small health plans have until May 23, 2008). After those compliance dates, covered health care providers will use only their NPIs to identify themselves in standard transactions where a health care provider identifier is required.

CMS now has a web page dedicated to the NPI: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NationalProidentStand/>. This site contains links to a wealth of general NPI information. Check this site often for updates. From this site, you can:

- Read the CMS NPI “Dear Provider” letter from CMS Administrator, Dr. Mark B. McClellan;
- Link to the latest NPI information, including Medlearn Matters articles;
- Learn how to apply for your NPI;
- Use the NPI Viewlet, an instructional web tool for completing the paper NPI application;
- Familiarize yourself with Medicare’s timeline for NPI implementation;
- View statistics from the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES);
- Discover educational material, including the NPI Final Rule and Frequently Asked Questions;
- Learn more about HIPAA and HIPAA’s Administrative Simplifications; and
- Much more, all in one convenient location.

**Get enumerated.** You may apply for your NPI using an easy web-based application process by going to the **NPPES web site:** <https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>. This site also contains a link to the downloadable paper application (if you prefer to use the paper form to apply) and contact information if you have questions. An employer or other organization with whom you are affiliated may obtain an NPI for you, with your permission, through the electronic file interchange (EFI) (bulk enumeration) process.

**Important NPI Note:** A sole proprietor/sole proprietorship is an Individual and is eligible for a single NPI. The sole proprietor must apply for the NPI using his or her own SSN, not an EIN even if he/she has an EIN. Because a sole proprietor/sole proprietorship is an Individual, he/she cannot be a subpart and cannot designate subparts.

## Information Required to Obtain Your NPI

For providers who are Individuals:

Provider Name	Provider Date of Birth
Country of Birth	State of Birth (if Country of Birth is U.S.)
Provider Gender	SSN or other proof of identity
Mailing Address	Practice Location Address and Phone Number
Taxonomy (Provider Type)	State License Information *
Contact Person Name	Contact Person Phone Number and E-mail

\* (required for certain taxonomies only)

Note: Taxonomy codes describe provider type/classification/specialization of Individual and Organization health care providers. A complete list of taxonomy codes is available from the Washington Publishing Company and can be found at <http://www.wpc-edi.com/codes/taxonomy>.

## Important Advice Concerning Your National Provider Identifier (NPI):

- **Take control of your NPI.** If you are a billing provider, your NPI will be your **billing number**. Your NPI does not belong to your employer or to any health plan, even if your employer or a health plan obtained it for you by bulk enumeration. It is the one number that identifies you as a health care provider in standard transactions with other health care providers, health plans, and health care clearinghouses.
- **Use your NPI.** After May 23, 2007, **the NPI will be the only health care provider identifier** that you or health plans will use to identify you as a health care provider in standard transactions, such as claims and encounter information transactions, coordination of benefits transactions, claims status inquiries/responses, eligibility inquiries/responses, payment and remittance advices, enrollment/disenrollment in health plans, and referrals. Your NPI will be used by all health plans, including Medicare, Medicaid, and all other private and public payers, to identify you as a health care provider.
- **Protect your NPI.** As an Individual **you are eligible for only one NPI** regardless of the number of different places you furnish health care or the number of different contracts you may have with health plans and other health care providers. Your NPI is yours for life and will never expire or be recycled and assigned to a different health care provider. Only in rare and unique circumstances, such as fraudulent use of your NPI by another, will you be able to contact the NPI Enumerator in order to obtain a new NPI to replace the one that was initially assigned to you.
- **Take care of your NPI.** You are responsible for updating NPI-related information with NPPES, the National Plan and Provider Enumeration System. If you are a covered health care provider, you must report any changes to any of the information that was furnished to obtain your NPI **within 30 days of the change**.
- **Share your NPI as needed.** There are certain covered entities and **others who will need to know your NPI in order to conduct standard transactions**. These may include, but may not be limited to, your employer, hospitals where you have privileges, and health care providers to whom you refer patients. These health care providers cannot be reimbursed unless they know your NPI so that they can use it in the standard claims transactions that they conduct. Also, health plans in which you are enrolled and to whom you submit claims need to know your NPI; they need to associate it with your enrollment information in order to ensure you receive proper payment for services rendered.

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